

ABSTRACT

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SKLP'S RASH ACTIONS
DISRUPT UNIFICATION SCHEME

The SKLP issued all these announcements and instructions on its own accord without due authority from the North Korean Reds. The SKLP's self-commitments were the result of false conclusions and assumptions drawn from the Pyongyang broadcast of 8 July. The only instructions they received then were to designate the month of July for propaganda and August for disturbances. For the latter, purpose the Military Affairs Department of the SKLP received 6 million won. However,

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increased pressure by the police, notably the mass arrest of members of the Seoul Standing Committee, on 20 August, disrupted the party's activities during August and the following months.

On 8 September, the SKLP received an order from North Korea to strengthen guerrilla activities. The order stated, among other things, "Each day thousands of our loyal comrades [guerrillas] are being killed in South Korea. The situation urges your immediate execution of an armed revolt. The North Korean leaders shall extend to you all possible support."

The September Revolt planned by the SKLP failed, largely because of the SKLP's misinterpretation of the orders issued by the North Korean leaders and the SKLP's failure to grasp the essence of the Democratic Front for Unification of Fatherland. Although the essence of the unification proposed by Pyongyang was peaceful unification of the country by means of a national election, the SKLP through a rash assumption took it to be a revolution with violence. Consequently, the SKLP made preparations on the basis that it was to assume the main role in the "revolution" and that North Korea would extend full support. The fact seemed to be, however, that the North Korean Communists' intention was to have the SKLP concentrate on guerrilla activity to divert national attention while the so-called "peaceful" unification was taking place in Seoul. The SKLP's hasty commitments appeared to have ruined the whole scheme.

Even after realizing their mistakes, the SKLP insisted on "September Revolution," in order to hold the rank and file together. However, at this stage it was too late to deceive its rank and file any longer. The demoralized SKLP guerrillas were turning to bandits and disgusted members were renouncing the party by the hundreds.

After August the authorities' pressure on the Reds became especially strong in Seoul, and the Seoul Standing Committee of the SKLP had to give its overt activities and limit itself to underground activities. This frustrated the rank and file, who gradually lost faith in the SKLP. The Seoul Standing Committee of the SKLP has not held a single open meeting since that time.

The spies planted in all levels of the Seoul Standing Committee by the police not only collected information but formed anti-SKLP cells to bore from within and reduce the organization to a hollow shell.

This weakening of the Seoul Standing Committee was a fatal blow to the SKLP as a whole, since the former controlled 80 percent of the political power and 60 percent of the membership.

In early September, the SKLP had 15,000 well-trained loyal intellectual members to participate in the September Revolt. Of these, 12,000 represented the General League of the All-Korean Cultural Group which included nine unions of various cultural occupations. The balance comprised representatives of the Industrial Technicians League, which included 21 unions of industrial workers. According to the plan, these men were to lead the September Revolt, which was to begin with the blasting of the Han Gang bridge in Seoul.

After the failure of the September Revolt, the SKLP resorted to military activities along the 38th Parallel in its last-ditch effort to restore the morale of the guerrillas and regain its dwindling membership by demonstrating its military strength.

The SKLP's tenet of "right to kill," as originally intended for revolutionary purpose, was relentlessly applied to its own members as a force to hold them together. Hence, threat and fear permeated the hierarchy.

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As the total collapse of the party became imminent, the SKLP realized the need for a drastic change from military to political activities. Realizing that the neglect of political activity had given an opportunity to the sprouting of what they termed "Titoism," the leaders made frantic appeals to the masses under slogans of "Freedom of demonstration, speech, and assembly." Nevertheless, they failed to check the mounting tide of desertion.

From the view of Nationalist converts who were formerly members of the SKLP, the greatest weakness of the South Korean government lies in: (1) its political ineptness in winning the hearts of the people, and (2) its failure to build a healthy economic foundation with which to cope with the Red menace. During the zenith of its power, the SKLP had considerable influence over farmers and factory workers through the Farmers Union and the Council of All-Korean Labor Union. It succeeded in winning these elements through skillful political propaganda, against which the South Korean government's countermeasures were never effective. The Reds blamed the aggravating economic hardships on the government in order to alienate the masses. Here also the odds were in their favor because of economic conditions.

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